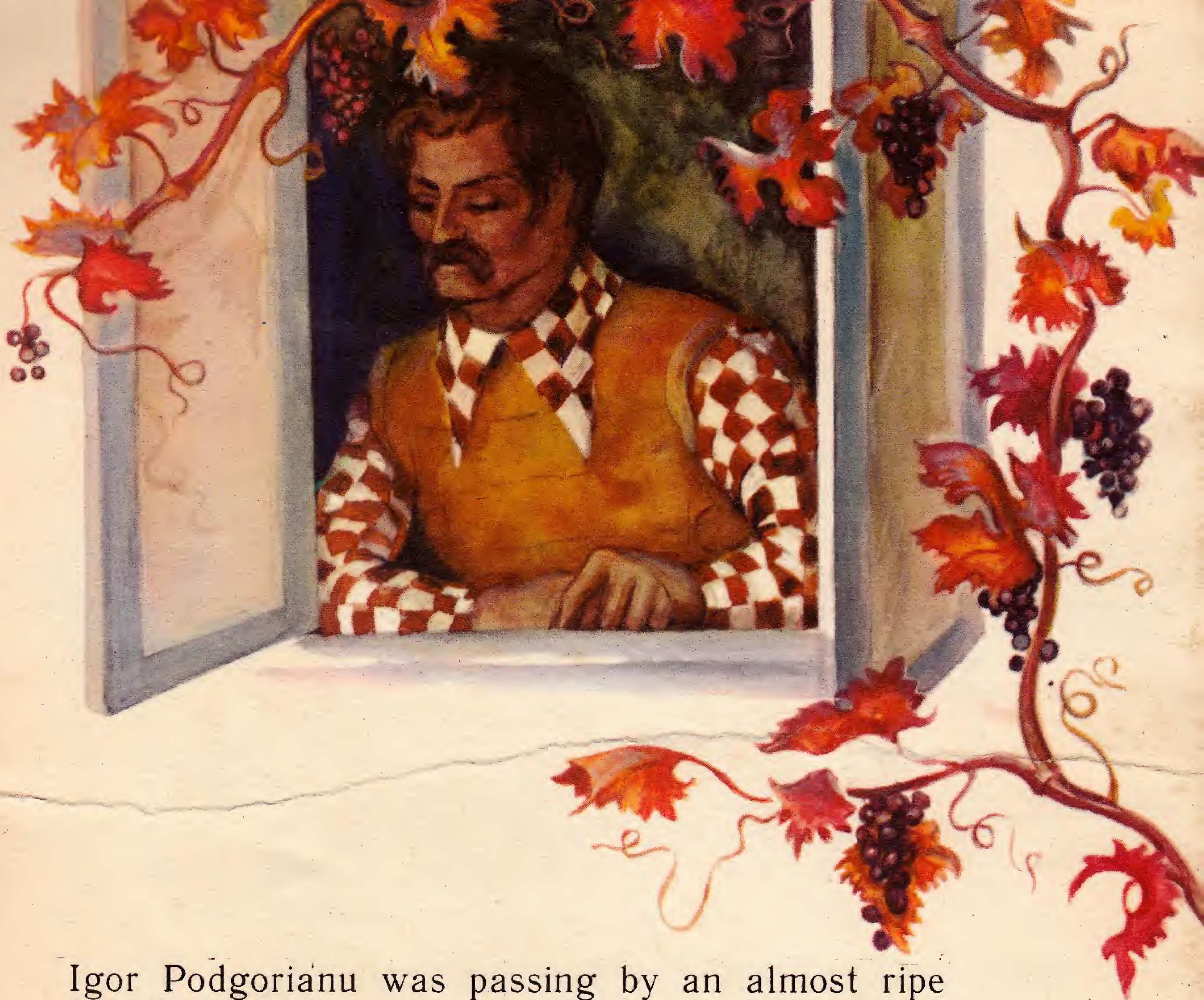


Petru Zadnipro

THE PICTURE WITH A TORN CORNER





Igor Podgorianu was passing by an almost ripe wheat field which was waving in the gentle breath of the wind. The heavy ears, as big as the sparrows, bent to the ground, proud of their richness. A pond was seen in the valley. The sun was inclining its forehead over the mirror of the water and washing out its golden locks.

Igor Podgorianu turned to the left into a by-street and set off for home. Nick, his son, was making something in the yard.

“What are you making, Nick?”

"A bicycle, dad! You know uncle Nicoara was here. He left a roll of paper... Here it is!"

Nick worked for some more time then he mounted a sunflower stick and went into the street to take "his horse" out for a walk.

The sun, which began to lower towards the sunset, was caressing his copper-coloured ringlets. Such a colour was similar to that of the autumn leaves. The rays passed through his thick eyelashes and filled his eyes, which looked like two flax flowers, with a bright glittering.

Costel and Marioara came out of the neighbouring yard. They put their hands above the eyes and called him:

"Ni-i-ick!"

The rider turned "his horse" and ran towards them. The dust rose in the air and a narrow winding stripe remained behind him.

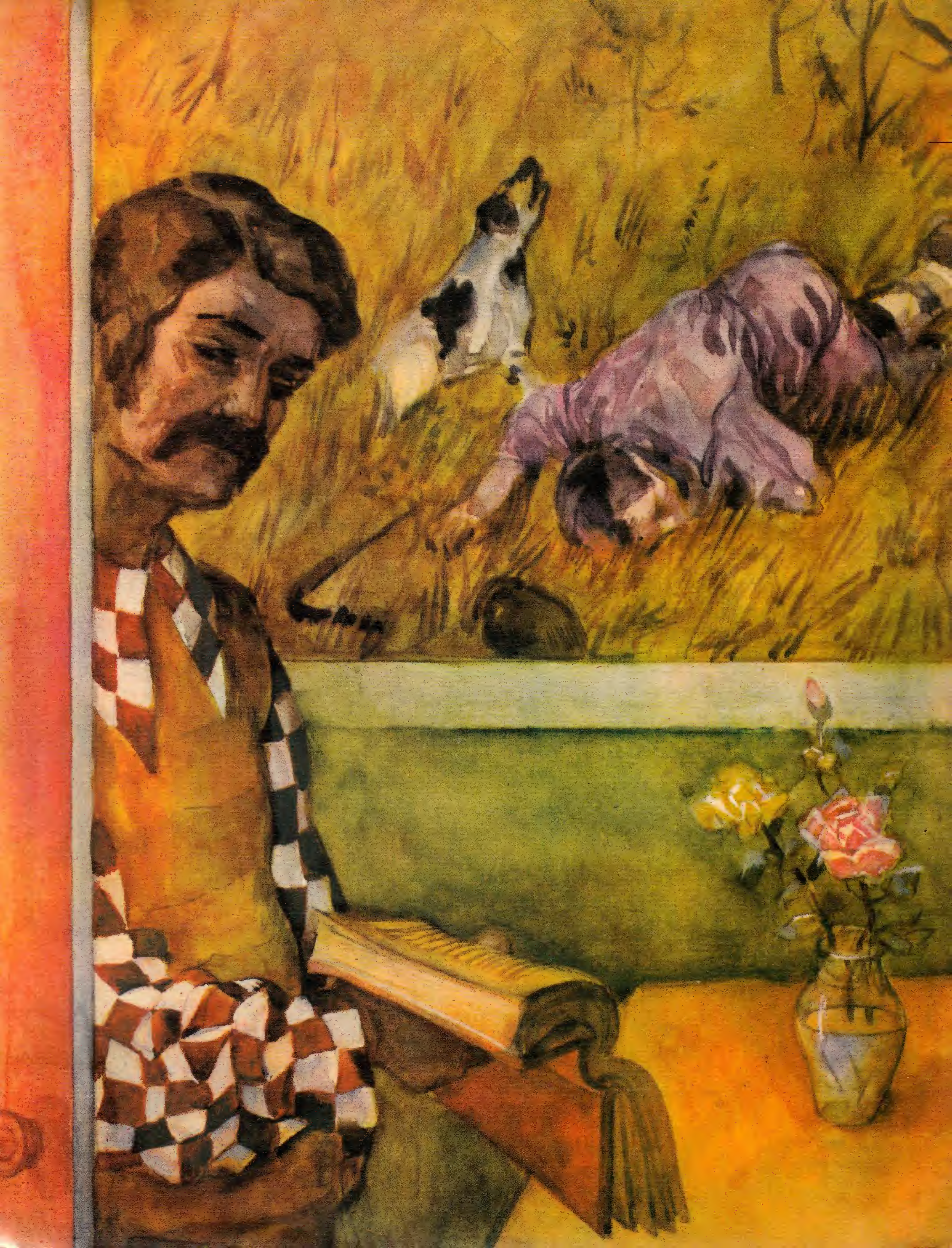
In some minutes all the three were already playing together. Nick was arranging some stones one above the other while Costel and Marioara were stirring some mortar.

The sun was setting. Groups of labourers were returning from the fields. The shadows of the twilight were spreading over the village. Igor Podgorianu cried out:

"Heigh, you children, that'll do for today! There'll be day tomorrow too."

The children picked up their toys, put them near a wall and started for home.

Entering the house Nick quickly took a slice of bread and biting off it walked cheerfully and garrulously up and down the room. Then suddenly he noticed on the



wall the picture which had been brought by uncle Nicoara. He peered at it for a long time and stood stone-still with the slice of bread in his hand.

"Dad?" he asked with blinking eyes. "Who's that boy? He looks like Vasilica. And why is he bleeding? Has anybody beaten him?"

"No, Nick, he isn't Vasilica."

"But who is he?"

"Well, he's just a boy. That airplane which is in the corner of the picture killed him."

"When, dad?"

"During the war."

Nick stared at the picture... The leaves of the trees were copper-coloured. Somewhere behind the trees there was probably a little spring with clear and cold water.

"Why did they kill him, dad?" insisted Nick. "What was he doing?"

"He was driving the sheep to the pasture, Nick. The bad airplane passed over and killed him. It was war... It is late, my darling, go to bed."

It was after the midnight when Igor Podgorianu fell asleep, forgetting the light on. Nick was turning from side to side in his little bed and murmuring something in his sleep... He was having a dream... Still it seemed to him that the killed boy was Vasilica.

"Why did they kill him?"... Nick thought.

He asked Prince Charming to bring life-giving water from the three springs to raise Vasilica from the dead. Here is Prince Charming passing through a dark forest. He is fighting with the griffins and dragons which are in the wait for him. And when he was to reach the three springs some black birds spread their wings



over the life-giving water, deathly croaking.

Nick woke up. He opened his eyes. Dad was sleeping. He rose, propping up on his elbow and looked in turn to the picture and to his dad. It was late and dark. It looked as if the darkness of the night attached its ear to the walls. Nick got up slowly from his little bed came up to the wall and stretched out his hand towards the picture. But he could not reach it. He got on a little chair and again stretched his hand towards the picture.

Then rising on tiptoe he tore one of the upper corners of the picture.





The night was moving away from the windows. In the village the roosters were announcing the coming of the dawn. Somewhere in the field the distant roaring of a tractor was heard. Two little lights were appearing then disappearing from behind the hills. Flocks of snow-white ducks were coming down from the yards through the potato stems full of dew and jumping from



the shore into the greenish water of the pond in the valley. It was already light and the village streets were full of voices when Igor Podgorianu awoke. He had read late that night and now his eyes ached. He got up and pulled the blanket over Nick who had uncovered himself. Then he noticed the picture.

With his heart throbbing Nick looked at his dad from under the blanket. After that he got up slowly and stood silently near his little bed. Dad turned to him.



“Nick, have you torn the picture?”

The boy was silent. He had a crumpled piece of paper in his hand and blinked very quickly. His lips were trembling. He was ready to burst into tears.

“When have you torn it?” dad asked him, seeing that he had something in his hand. “What have you got there?”

Nick stretched out his hand with the crumpled paper. His eyes were full of tears.

Dad embraced and pressed him to his chest and, stroking his cheeks, said to him:

“Don’t cry, Nick! Here, don’t cry!” and in order to hide his tears he turned his head towards the window.

Near the barn o dove was standing on the brim of a clay bowl. It was dipping the beak into the water and, shaking its head, was splashing silver drops all over around.





25 коп.

Петру Заднипру
КАРТИНА С ОТОРВАННЫМ УГЛОМ

(на английском языке)

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ИБ № 2478

Дат ла кулес 25.10.82. Искэлит пентру типар 17.08.83.

Форматул 84×108¹/₁₆. Хыртие офсет № 1.

Гарнитурэ литерарэ. Импримаре офсет.

Коль де типар конв. 1,68. Коль едиториале 1,89. Импр. кром.-конв. 7,77.

Тиражул 20000. Команда № 21738. Прецул 25 коп.

Едитура «Литература артистикэ».

Кишинэу, пр. Ленин, 180.

Комбинатул полиграфик. Кишинэу, стр. Т. Чорбэ, 32.

Комитетул де Стат ал РСС Молдовенешть пентру едитурь,
полиграфие ши комерцул ку кэрць.